

## 2. STANDARDS FOR YOUTH INFORMATION CENTRES

This section

- (a) *introduces the Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres and explains its purpose;*
- (b) *outlines the Quality Review and Registration System for YICs.*

### **Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres**

The Code of Standards sets out the principles and procedures for the operation and evaluation of Youth Information Centres. It attempts to capture the elements, which combine to produce an effective service and make for good practice. (See booklet *Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres*).

The Code is arranged under the following 13 headings:

1. ***Principles***
2. ***Management***
3. ***Finance***
4. ***Premises***
5. ***Personnel***
6. ***Information Service/System***
7. ***Opening Hours***
8. ***Publicity***
9. ***Outreach***
10. ***Educational Role***
11. ***Liaison***
12. ***Monitoring/Evaluation***
13. ***Relationship with Youth Information Resource Unit***

The purpose of the Code is to act as a benchmark for good practice, providing a framework for assessing the quality of services, and the means of quality assurance for young people, information service managers and funding bodies.

It is intended as a tool in a process in which a YIC assesses and evaluates its services.

It enables users, staff, managers and funding bodies to be clear about what constitutes good practice so that they are then better able to secure it and provide a quality service.

*Note: See also 2A. Confidentiality on page 9 of this Section.*

## QUALITY REVIEW/REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The Code of Standards is also used as the basis of a registration system for Youth Information Centres. The purpose of the register is to give official recognition and a mark of quality to Centres, which comply with the Standards, thereby helping to ensure public confidence in the service provided.

The National Youth Information Monitoring Committee (NYIMC) is the registration body for Youth Information Centres.

The NYIMC acknowledges that YICs are committed to providing a quality service and considers that, with support, Centre management bodies are best placed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own services. They have, therefore, agreed a structured self-assessment process for the quality review of YIC services.

Following the Quality Review process, Centres, which are approved for registration, receive a certificate of registration from the NYIMC.

*You will find an outline description of the Quality Review process on the next page. This is followed by a copy of the Guidance Notes, which have been produced to assist the process by identifying the practices and sources of information, which need to be considered when evaluating whether a particular Standard is being met.*

## QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

### Introduction

When the Code of Standards setting out the core principles and procedures for the operation and evaluation of Youth Information Centres was launched, it was envisaged that it would be used as the basis for a registration system. The essential purpose and value of this register would be to give official recognition and a mark of quality to Youth Information Centres which comply with the Code, thereby helping to ensure public confidence in the service provided.

Registration is, therefore, a quality assurance system concerned with the implementation and monitoring of these quality standards with the aim of developing policies and practices, which make the young person the central focus of service delivery.

Quality provision requires the active maintenance and regular review of standards. As the registration body for Youth Information Centres, the NYIMC acknowledges that Centres are committed to providing a quality service to users and considers that, with support, Centre management bodies are best placed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own services.

Accordingly, the NYIMC has agreed a structured self-assessment process for the quality review of Youth Information Centre services.

### Outline of Quality Review Process

1. YIC management will have overall responsibility for the quality review and the consequent production of a development plan.
2. To carry out the work involved, a Quality Review Panel will be established at local level. It will be representative of the Youth Information Advisory Committee, include the Centre Co-ordinator, and be chaired by Centre management.
3. The Quality Review Panel will receive professional support and guidance from the Youth Information Resource Unit.
4. This support will include an advance meeting with the Quality Review Panel as well as a subsequent meeting to discuss the outcome of the review. Practical support will also include the provision of relevant documentation (e.g. checklists, samples) to facilitate the review process.
5. The quality review will be carried out within an agreed framework. In the course of the review, the Quality Review Panel will consider whether standards and good practice requirements are being met. Based on findings,

a three year development plan will be drawn up.

6. The development plan will set out clearly stated, realistic objectives as well as specific targets and priorities. These will be based on the outcome of the review and on national standards requirements.
7. The suggested timeframe for the completion of the review process is 3 months.
8. The quality review will also include a Quality of Information Assessment.

*\* Procedure - Each youth information provider will be requested to write up a detailed record of how s/he dealt with one query per week (e.g. nature of query, need clarification, information supplied, sources / materials used, handouts provided, referrals, follow-up). The query will be decided randomly, in advance, by the Centre Co-ordinator.*

A random selection of these query records will be assessed by the Youth Information Resource Unit, in consultation with the Centre Co-ordinator. This assessment will be relayed to the Quality Review Panel and form part of the overall review.

*The procedure for this is also envisaged as a training tool for youth information staff (e.g. when exploring query handling).*

9. On completion, the review report and the development plan will be submitted to the Youth Information Resource Unit. Having added observations and recommendations (which will be relayed to the Quality Review Panel in the first instance), the Youth Information Resource Unit will, in turn, submit them to the NYIMC for registration purposes.

These observations and recommendations will be based on the review report as the Youth Information Resource Unit will not be directly involved in the review carried out by the Quality Review Panel.

10. If considered necessary, the NYIMC or its representative(s) may visit the Youth Information Centre for the purpose of clarifying matters in relation to the registration process.
11. Centres will have a right of appeal to the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education & Science.

*\*A pro-forma record sheet for this purpose is supplied to YICs by the Youth Information Resource Unit. Such recording commenced from the date of implementation of the process nationwide and is an ongoing feature of YIC query recording procedures.*

## **YIC ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE GUIDANCE NOTES TO ACCOMPANY CODE OF STANDARDS**

*(Review report to be drawn up based on the following assessment. Relevant documentation to be appended.)*

### **1.0 Principles**

- 1.1--1.9 Check procedure for ensuring that all workers both understand, and act in accordance with, these principles.

### **2.0 Management**

- 2.1 Check management structure and functions, with particular reference to the areas mentioned. Obtain e.g. organisational / responsibility chart.
- Check security arrangements for ensuring the safety of staff and users.
- 2.2 Check arrangements for ensuring that members of the management body are familiar with the Code of Standards and registration requirements so that they can discharge their obligations in this area.
- 2.3 List members of Youth Information Advisory Committee giving details of relevant experience and expertise, frequency of meetings etc.

### **3.0 Finance**

- 3.1 Check details of income and expenditure. Assess adequacy of income in light of requirements.

### **4.0 Premises**

- 4.1 – 4.7 Check premises and layout against list.

### **5.0 Personnel**

- 5.1 – 5.3 Check recruitment procedures and associated documentation in relation to appointments e.g. advertisement, job specification, composition / expertise of interview panel, qualifications and experience of personnel selected for various positions.

- 5.4 Check that there is a contract and job description for each worker, covering the areas specified.
- 5.5 Assess adequacy of staffing in the light of current and future service needs.
- 5.6 Check that the Centre allocates part of its budget to training activities. Check Centre training programme. Check that the Centre maintains training records. Check records of training undertaken by each worker as well as details of ongoing supervision and support provided.
- 5.7 Check details of induction training programme/materials for new workers. In particular, check that the induction provides for adequate consideration of the *Principles* outlined in Standards Section 1.
- 5.8 Check procedure for assessing and reviewing both individual and overall staff training needs. Check procedure for informing staff of both internal and external training opportunities. Check details of opportunities provided for attendance at internal and external training events.
- 5.9 Check arrangements for staff briefing sessions on changes in the information field. Check procedure for ensuring that information updates are brought to the attention of all staff at the earliest possible opportunity. Check details of seminars, workshops, conferences attended.
- 6.0 Information Service/System**
- 6.1 Check content of information stock against subjects outlined in the YIC Classification System.
- 6.2 Check procedure for identifying and monitoring information needs.
- 6.3 Check arrangements for collecting, storing, retrieving and updating information. Check that the information stock is well organised and presented. Check that information materials are organised according to the YIC classification system and that staff have been trained in its use. Check that a certain quantity of information is available on open access.
- 6.4 Check that information is available in a variety of formats, as specified.

6.5 Check arrangements for updating information materials as well as procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information disseminated. Check that appropriate referral procedures are in place. Check that staff providing telephone information services are supported and supervised in the same way as those providing information to personal callers.

## **7.0 Opening Hours**

7.1 Check opening hours. Consider if these hours are the most convenient for young people and those who work with them. If not, consider what adjustments can be made within existing resources.

7.2 Check that opening hours are prominently displayed, both internally and externally. Check arrangements for publicising opening hours in the community.

7.3 Check that the Centre is always open and staffed, as publicised.

## **8.0 Publicity**

8.1 Check strategy for publicising Centre services. Check that all available media are being used e.g. local newspapers, local radio. Obtain copies of publicity materials or articles published. Obtain details of venues at which YIC poster is located as well as mailing list of agencies to which publicity materials are regularly distributed.

## **9.0 Outreach**

9.1 Check strategy for attracting non-users and for ensuring a user-friendly environment for various user groups, regardless of background or ability.

9.2 Check strategies for identifying and targeting less advantaged groups.

9.3 Check details of outreach services provided.

## **10.0 Educational Role**

10.1–10.2 Check details of educational/information awareness activities organised both internally and externally e.g. use of noticeboards, information campaigns, workshops, seminars, publications, broadcasts.

- 10.3 Check strategies aimed at involving young people in the operation of the service and in developing their information skills.
- 11.0 Liaison**
- 11.1 Check the range and type of voluntary / statutory agency with which contact and working relationships have been developed.
- 12.0 Monitoring/Evaluation**
- 12.1 Check procedures for reporting to management and funding agency on progress in meeting objectives.
- 12.2 Check query returns and records of outreach activities undertaken. Check that the data collected is used to identify, inter alia, new trends/needs, gaps in service, issues which might inform policy making in other relevant agencies.
- 12.3 Check that an Annual Report (including Accounts) is produced.
- 12.4 Check arrangements for periodic reviews of service.
- 12.5-12.6 Check that both quantitative techniques (e.g. records of usage) and qualitative techniques (e.g. user feedback, analysis of query range and complexity, indications of successful outcomes) are used in performance measurement.
- 13.0 Relationship with Youth Information Resource Unit**
- 13.1 Check that Centre staff participate in the co-ordinating activities (e.g. network meetings, training events, joint projects), organised by the Youth Information Resource Unit.
- 13.2 Check that the Youth Information Resource Unit is always informed of senior personnel changes in the Centre.
- 13.3 Check that the Youth Information Resource Unit is consulted if any factor arises which would affect the nature or quality of the service provided.

#### Development Plan - Proposed Headings

1. Rationale
2. Objectives (*arising from deficiencies/new service needs identified, during review*)
3. Tasks
4. Resources Required
5. Priorities
6. Target Dates

## 2A. CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES

This sub-section

- (a) *sets out the rationale for Confidentiality;*
- (b) *defines Confidentiality, and highlights some issues relevant to its operation;*
- (c) *identifies the circumstances when Confidentiality might have to be breached and offers general guidance on the procedure to be followed in any such situation.*

### Rationale

One of the fundamental principles of youth information is the establishment of trustworthy relationships with the young people, or others, who seek help from our Centres. Trust is one of the core conditions of helping relationships and those who use Youth Information Centres need to be able to do so secure in the knowledge that what they have to say will go no further. The offer of confidentiality is, therefore, an essential requirement in encouraging and maintaining public confidence in our service, and is one of the cornerstones on which the youth information service is based. It is also a means of expressing the value and respect, which a Centre places on the rights and integrity of individual users. For that reason, Standard 1.5 of the *Code of Standards for Youth Information Centres* affirms that “*Confidentiality and respect for the anonymity of the user will be guaranteed (within the confines of the law)*”. It follows that confidentiality must be maintained except in very exceptional circumstances.

### What Does Confidentiality Mean and How Does It Operate?

Confidentiality means that nothing learned by a Centre from enquirers, *including the fact of their visits*, will be passed on to anyone outside the service without their express permission. All matters raised by clients must be kept confidential.

### Some Issues Relevant to the Operation of Confidentiality

**Privacy in Centre** – Every reasonable step to ensure privacy must be taken when dealing with clients.

**Telephones** – The principle of confidentiality applies to all communication with clients. To avoid possible problems, it is wise to check with clients whether the Centre may write to, or telephone them at home. This enquiry should cover what the Centre response should be if the phone is answered by

someone other than the client, or by an answering machine. To telephone and leave a message without the client's agreement would be a breach of confidentiality.

**Client Records** – Records giving details of clients must be kept securely. Correspondence and records must not be left on open display.

Records/data (including CVs), held on computer, must be stored securely e.g. by the use of a password. Records/data held on disk must also be stored securely.

**Client Consent** – There is no breach of confidentiality *if the client agrees to information being given to a third party* e.g. when letters are written and phone calls are made on behalf of the client.

**Staff & Colleagues** – Necessary consultation with other information workers in the Centre (*covered by the principle of confidentiality*) does not constitute a breach of confidentiality.

**Illness** – If anyone in the Centre collapses or is in need of urgent medical attention, there is no breach of confidentiality in calling an ambulance or doctor and giving the name and address of the person concerned, if they are known. No further information about the content of the client's enquiries should be given.

### **Is It Ever Right to Break Confidentiality?**

There may be exceptional circumstances when it is right and proper for a Centre to break confidence. Centres may feel an obligation, or be subject to a requirement, to report what they have been told. For instance, agencies are working in a climate where there is increased reporting and growing public awareness of child abuse in all its forms.

Breaches of confidentiality may, therefore, be justified in situations

- where there is a danger to the client or others;
- where there is a legal requirement to do so.

### **What Procedure Should Be Followed When a Breach of Confidentiality Is Being Considered?**

It is not possible to outline all the possible circumstances where the question of a breach of confidentiality might arise. Each case must be decided on its merits after careful consultation with a series of people, each using their own

considered judgement. Any decision to breach confidentiality should, therefore, be made jointly and not individually.

Concerns, which an information worker might have about the need for a Centre to consider a breach of confidentiality, should immediately be reported to the Centre Co-ordinator who will set in train the clarification and consultation process which must precede any decision to disclose information, and breach what is a fundamental principle. Only after extensive consultation and high-level agreement (involving the Youth Service Director) should the final decision be made.